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Recommended Citation

"Chat with a Columnist, A Cartoonist, A Syndicator: Cox Interactive Media Offers Live On-Line Chats March 15-23" (2000). *News Releases*. 8777.

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Feb. 29, 2000
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NEWS RELEASE

CHAT WITH A COLUMNIST, A CARTOONIST, A SYNDICATOR: COX INTERACTIVE MEDIA OFFERS LIVE ON-LINE CHATS MARCH 15-23

DAYTON, Ohio — What was it like to grow up with a celebrity mother?

Why do the foibles of everyday life make great reading? How can you get a start as a cartoonist, a newspaper writer, a screenwriter? What does it take to become syndicated?

Cox Interactive Media is offering a series of live on-line chats in mid-March with presenters coming to Dayton for the March 31 writers' workshop at the University of Dayton as part of the Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor.

Anyone with Internet access can join in the chat by visiting www.ActiveDayton.com/entertainment/erma/, clicking on the scheduled chat and registering.

All the chats are scheduled from 8 to 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Here's the line-up:

- Wednesday, March 15: Chat with a columnist. Featuring Mary McCarty, metro columnist, *Dayton Daily News*; Joe Weasel, Scripps Howard syndicated columnist; and Craig Wilson, *USA Today* columnist. McCarty, who writes pieces that touch the heart, was named 1999's Best Columnist in Ohio by the Society of Professional Journalists. Weasel, a Columbus humor writer who received encouragement from Bombeck early in his career, writes a column that's distributed to more than 300 papers weekly. Feature writer Craig Wilson writes the weekly column, "The Final Word," which addresses topics of everyday life "most people find too mundane to muse upon, but to which they can all relate."
- Thursday, March 16: Chat with a Bombeck. Matt Bombeck, a writer for television movies, will talk about breaking into the field and growing up with a famous writer.
- Tuesday, March 21: Chat with a cartoonist. Featuring Dayton natives *Akron Beacon Journal* editorial cartoonist Chip Bok and "Agnes" creator Tony Cochran. Bok's cartoons appear regularly in more than 100 publications, including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and others through Creators Syndicate. Cochran, whose mother was "Mayva" in Bombeck's columns and her close friend, has been drawing the comic strip "Agnes" for a

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year. It's syndicated through Creators Syndicate and appears in the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Chicago Tribune* and the *Dayton Daily News*, among other newspapers.

- Wednesday, March 22: Chat with an editor/syndicator. Featuring Lee Salem, executive vice president and editor of Universal Press Syndicate. Founded in 1970, Universal is America's largest independent newspaper syndicate. Universal syndicated Bombeck's work and such talented writers and artists as Abigail Van Buren, William F. Buckley Jr., Garry Trudeau and Cathy Guisewite.
- Thursday, March 23: Chat with Leonard Pitts Jr. Featuring nationally syndicated columnist and the author of *Becoming Dad: Black Men and the Journey to Fatherhood*. Pitts writes a column for the *Miami Herald* on family and social issues that's syndicated in more than 150 newspapers nationwide. He is a three-time winner of the National Headliner Award and a finalist for the 1992 Pulitzer Prize.

The March 29-April 1 Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor features the presentation of Erma Bombeck's papers to the University of Dayton and includes a writing competition, a dinner and keynote speech featuring Art Buchwald, a writers' workshop, an academic symposium, an "Evening with Erma's Friends" presentation and a series of book-signings. For information about any of the events, call (937) 229-3241.

The conference is sponsored by the University of Dayton's National Alumni Association in conjunction with ActiveDayton.com, Books & Co., *Dayton Daily News*, News-Talk 1290 WHIO, Suburban Newspapers of Dayton, Washington-Centerville Public Library, WHIO-TV and WYSO-Radio.

For more information about the on-line chats, visit www.ActiveDayton.com/entertainment/erma or e-mail Rhonda Havig at Cox Interactive Media at rhavig@cimedia.com.